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ABSTRACT

This secondary teacher education program is based on the following assumptions: a) learning is accomplished through the individual; b) learning is a personal concern; c) learning occurs through exploration and experimentation; and d) learning is a blend of experiences, hopes, and ideas. Jointly sponsored by RHAM High School and the Secondary Education Department at Eastern Connecticut State College, the program focuses on the development of the participant in relation to his own and society's purposes in secondary education, the participant as a teacher and human being, his relationship with his students, the nature of the learning process, and the nature and content of his major field of study. These objectives are implemented through university course work, seminars, a 4-hour per week practicum at RHAM High School (which is lengthened to a full-time field experience) and independent study. Four more schools have become involved in the program during the academic year 1972-73, and a program for evaluation is being designed. (BRB)

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# A PROCESS FOR BECOMING A TEACHER

## INTRODUCTION

What funadmental assumptions are the bases for your teacher education program? Can you live with the following assumptions in your professional education program?

1. Learning is a process which one must do for oneself, it can not be done for or to oneself.
2. Learning is a personal matter, one can not adopt another's learning.
3. Learning occurs when the learner is free to explore, to experiment, and
4. Learning is the result of blending one's experiences, hopes, ideas in the matrix of his environment.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a teacher education program that is being jointly developed by the social studies department at RHAM High School and the Secondary Education Department at Eastern Connecticut State College around these assumptions. It is a viable model which does not require more money, space, staff or material. Its initiation requires no major curriculum change by either institution. It does require commitments by the personnel involved.

They are committed to the belief that the most effective way to help a person become a master teacher is to help him discover for himself his personal perception of:

1. his own and society's purposes relative to secondary education
2. himself as a teacher and a human being
3. the students that he will be working with
4. the nature of the learning process
5. the nature and content of his subject [1]

The prospective teacher needs to be released from the idea that a belief is good or bad, right or wrong. The belief is good, correct when it is used successfuly by an individual. The prospective teacher needs support and trust and understanding as he struggles to develop a style of teaching.

Also they are committed to the idea that teaching is essentially a way of behaving, not just knowing. The behavior of the teacher is the result of how he perceives the situation at the moment of action, how he internelizes the numerous

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1 Arthur W. Combs, The Professional Education of Teachers (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965) p.99

contributing factors and how he responds. Teaching is a creative act. Preparing teachers is not a question of teaching them how. It is a matter of helping each to discover his own best ways.

The program recognizes the unique contributions of both the school and the college. It has been evolving for two years and it will be in operation during the academic year 1972-73.

It is an outgrowth of many of the ideas expressed in current educational literature and supported by research. It draws heavily from the writings of Carl Rogers and Arthur Combs.

## CURRICULUM DESIGN

What kind of a curriculum design will be necessary to implement this rationale? Flexibility is a key factor in the general structure of the program. As students think through and work out their own commitments, skills, and styles of teaching it becomes increasingly apparent that topics, experiences and allotted time schedules must vary with each student. Therefore this paper gives an overview rather than a detailed model.

As the program develops there are four recurring steps. Students need to be exposed to a variety of models, ideas, experiences, materials and methods which are not familiar to them. Students need opportunities to test their ideas in a variety of situations. Students need guidance as they build their conceptual models. Students need to express and demonstrate publicly their commitments, skills and styles of teaching.

The design provides concurrent and interlocking experiences rather than sequential ones. It is an evolving one based on the needs of the students as they progress toward becoming master teachers.

## DETERMINING HIS OWN AND SOCIETY'S PURPOSES

Many secondary school teachers lack a strong commitment to the school's purposes and its role in society. They fail to realize their own purposes as teachers

in the secondary school. In many cases the erudite rationale and philosophical purposes of the school are found only under P in the files, not in the second period tenth grade English class on Tuesday morning. Until the teacher has commitments which he is willing to state publicly, he will not be a professional teacher of quality. To help the teacher define his purposes, there is a need to expose him to both theory and reality, to ideas of the professional and the non-professional. Films are reviewed; books and articles are critiqued; surveys are made on the street and in the schools; interviews are conducted with students and parents in their homes.

One of the most important aspects of the program is for the students to work in the school and show how it's functioning. Administrators and teachers at RHAM High School give the students a detailed orientation of their design for education. The prospective students discuss the program with the school community. They observe and study the high school program in operation. They also visit other high schools as a group and on an individual basis.

To help the student develop his commitment he is required to write a signed letter to the editor of the local paper or make some other public demonstration of his commitments. He has to be committed as a prospective teacher to his beliefs about the role of the secondary school before he starts teaching. It is understood that he may change but it is hoped that his commitments will be firm enough to give him direction as he searches for his own beliefs. Thus the student gets support but he must assume personal responsibility for defining his belief about his own and society's purpose for secondary education.

HIMSELF AS A TEACHER AND HUMAN BEING

The second objective of the program is to work in the field of human relations both as an individual and as a teacher at the high school. Films depicting vignettes of good and poor relations are shown and discussed. Case studies are analyzed. Simulations are created. Techniques for introspection are utilized. Observations are made in schools. Resource people from various minority groups and people with different

life styles discuss with the prospective teachers how they feel about education and classroom teaching. For example many students for the first time discuss with the drug addicts why education turns them off or with a black parent how she feels about visiting the school. Through exposure and contact the students become more sensitive to human relations.

One way to help the prospective teacher to develop his own value system is to ask him to draw his own coat of arms.[1] These are placed on the class bulletin board and discussed. Later they are pasted into the teacher's plan book.

During the study of human relations, there is a need for counseling because the students often find themselves in conflicting situations which may ultimately require a radical change in their value system and subsequent behavior. It is difficult for the prospective teacher to draw the line between theory and realism and idealism and expediency. Role playing and simulations are used frequently and effectively in bringing about a change in the behavior of the prospective teacher.

As a result of these experiences and readings, the prospective teacher examines, formulates, tests and implements his own value system in working with other people. The belief is that "a teacher's understanding of others can only be as deep as the wisdom he possesses when he looks inward upon himself."[2]

PERCEPTIONS OF THE STUDENTS

What are the high school students really like? Since the prospective teacher is close in age to the high school student, it is often assumed that he can easily relate to the high school student. But how difficult it is for a middle class prospective teacher with his expectations to relate to the boy in a technical school, the girl from the inner city or the wealthy boy who has everything.

Psychologists and social workers give lectures. Seminars are held with parents, school guidance counselors, administrators and students. The prospective teacher is encouraged to see the students in a variety of situations at home, in the corner drug store and in the numerous activities of the school program. He is encouraged to help

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1 Sidney B. Simon, Leland W. Howe, and Howard Kirschenbaum, Values Clarification, New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc. 1972, P.278

2 Arthur Jersild, When Teachers Face Themselves, New York, Teachers College, 1968) pg. 83

in these various activities so as to gain an understanding of the high school student. With the guidance of school person, the student carries out a case study.

At RHAM High School, the prospective teacher follows the student's daily schedule to experience his pressures. The teacher also observes the student and makes an anecdotal report of the student's educational experience for the day. He works with the students individually and in small groups. All of the activities and experiences are so arranged that the prospective teacher can call on the RHAM or ECSC staff for guidance and help.

As a result of these varied experiences, the prospective teacher sees the students as individuals going about the daily task of living.

THE LEARNING PROCESS

The emphasis here is to study various instructional patterns so that the prospective teacher can select those which he feels are most helpful in the learning process. The prospective teacher studies various instructional patterns, observes a variety of teachers, and studies models which are on video tapes. He then tries out various instructional patterns in micro and mini teaching situations. He is observed by his peers, college supervisors or cooperating teacher. The supporting staff serve as mirrors rather than critics, helpers rather than evaluators, stimulators rather than judges. The emphasis is on helping the teacher develop skill in analyzing his teaching behavior. Various techniques such as those developed by Ned Flanders or individualized procedures developed by the ECSC faculty are used. Films which stress particular teaching skills and methods are shown as models. Questionning, listening and responding styles are studied. Seminars and workshops to develop skill in writing behavioral and performance objectives are offered.

The purpose is to help the student develop a repertoire of instructional patterns which he feels is best at the right time for the right group. The student develops his style in micro and mini teaching situations and finally he works with a regular class on a continuing basis. During this time he is aided by the entire team of teachers from RHAM School and also the ECSC staff. Different members of the team

often see the prospective teacher in different ways and are able to make a variety of constructive suggestions.

The philosophy of the program might be summarized by "sometimes we teach more by teaching less." An assumption is that the student will transfer and adapt skills that he has learned in various situations to the standard classroom situation. The student also does have an opportunity to work with two or three classes on a continuing and comprehensive basis.

THE NATURE AND CONTENT OF HIS SUBJECT

Throughtout the program the prospective teacher is developing his perception of the nature and content of his subject. He studies his discipline in the liberal arts program. In his professional preparation, he is continually analyzing and relating the value of his discipline to the realistic needs of the secondary school student.

The prospective teacher is encouraged to develop an independent study program which will help him realize in depth and in reality the importance of his discipline. A student may elect to return to RHAM High School and make a research study of a particular aspect of his teaching. Or, he may go to another school and work at a different grade level. Other typical alternatives are to work with a social agency in the inner school, an industrial concern, or a governmental agency. In some cases the student may elect to go to another part of the United States such as Puerto Rico to study Spanish culture or to New Mexico to work with the Indians. Or, he may elect to go to another country such as Greece, Italy, France, India or England. In all the independent study programs the student designs his study and submits it to a college committee which either approves or recommends revisions. When approved, the college will help the prospective teacher to make arrangements for the program, plan for its supervision and in needy cases help to get loans or scholarships.

Thus the student may have an experience in areas which deepen his understanding of a discipline and which help him to relate to a realistic situation.

ORGANIZATION

A student is admitted to the education program at the beginning of his senior year. During the junior year he takes adolescent psychology and foundations of education. In each of these courses there is provision for a community work experience usually working with secondary school students. In some cases he may elect to have a community work experience in his sophomore year. All candidates are screened by a committee.

A student in the secondary education program majors in a particular field or discipline. He has to meet the major requirements of that department. The prospective teacher has an education minor which includes 24 hours of professional courses. During the first semester of his senior year he takes a senior seminar which studies the major areas that have been mentioned previously. While he is taking this course he is taking a parallel practicum in the field, in this case at RHAM High School. The student is required to spend a minimum of 4 hours per week at the school. At this point, the Chairman of the Social Studies Department and an ECSC Professor jointly plan a program with the student to meet his needs. In all cases the student's program is designed so that the student can proceed as soon as he feels competent in the various areas that have been outlined above. Toward the end of the first semester the student is expected to have a continuing experience with one class. During the semester the student has a chance to work at various grade levels in various subjects so that he may select those in which he feels most successful. As a result of the first semester, the prospective teacher has a first hand knowledge of the school, the students, the program and faculty. If both faculties and prospective teacher feel that he will benefit from full time work at the school he may continue on during the first eight weeks of the second semester on a full time basis. During this time he has an opportunity to continue to explore various teaching skills and he will also work with a class or classes on a continuing basis. During the first eight weeks he has weekly seminars with the college faculty and many times these are held jointly with the RHAM staff at the school. During this time he will be taking a methods of teaching history course taught by a college professor and supplemented by RHAM per-

sonnel. The last eight weeks of his senior year may be an independent study program or he may return to the college to complete work in his major field and take a Senior Seminar II in Secondary Education. Independent study may be substituted for these if the student is away from the campus.

SUMMARY

At present the efforts have been to design a program to give a new direction to teacher preparation. During the academic year 1972-73 four more schools will become involved in similar programs. A program for evaluation is being designed.

As a result of this program the prospective teacher will have assumed the responsibility for developing a personal way to teach. The program is best summarized by the following quote from Arthur Combs: "To help them (prospective teachers) discover their own best ways of teaching, they need to be immersed in educational and human problems just as deeply as they can take it, with security and help of friendly persons around them to help when the going gets rough and to promote encouragement and assistance as it is needed." [1]

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1- Arthur W. Combs - The Professional Education of Teachers (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965), pg. 105

Submitted by; Professor Paul L. Benedict
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